



# ONEHUNGA HIGH SCHOOL

## Study Guide 2026



*Exams are your opportunity to show what you have learned. Careful preparation, smart techniques and steady effort will help you succeed.*

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# STUDY GUIDE FOR SUCCESS IN NCEA

## INTRODUCTION

This study guide provides practical tips and strategies to prepare for NCEA exams. It covers how to read questions carefully, plan answers, manage your time effectively, and practise so that you approach exams with confidence.



## GETTING STARTED

**Careful revision of both content and skills is a process that takes time.**

Begin your study weeks before exams. This gives you enough time to review all your subjects, practise different types of questions, and strengthen areas you find most challenging. Starting early also reduces stress by allowing you to spread your study out and avoid last minute cramming.

## BUILDING THE RIGHT HABITS

### 1. Commit to Success

- Decide now that you want to improve your results and back that up with steady effort.
- Remember that consistency is more powerful than bursts of last minute study.

### 2. Plan Your Time

- Create a weekly study timetable and stick to it.
- Break work into shorter sessions to keep your focus high.
- Use spaced practice: return to topics several times over weeks instead of doing them all at once.

### 3. Set Up a Good Study Space

- Keep your desk clear of distractions.
- Make sure you have all your notes, books, and equipment ready before you start.

### 4. Balance Your Commitments

- Reduce activities that take away from study during exam time.
- Prioritise rest and revision over unnecessary distractions.

### 5. Motivation Tips

- You create your own luck the same way you create your own future.
- Set specific goals for each week and tick them off.
- Do not just hope for the best, give your best.
- Make it happen. Start today and keep going until the end.



## CREATING A STUDY ENVIRONMENT

### Light

- Good lighting helps you stay alert and prevents eye strain.
- A desk lamp or overhead light is ideal. Natural light is useful but avoid glare directly on your page or screen.

### Air

- Fresh air boosts concentration. Open a window if possible.
- If your space feels stuffy, step outside for a few minutes every hour.

### Space

- Work at a desk and chair rather than on your bed.
- Choose a quiet place where you can focus without interruptions.
- Some students use quiet background music but avoid talking or loud sound.
- Keep your study area set up and ready so you can begin quickly.



## PLANNING YOUR STUDY TIME

### Why Plan?

Without a plan, study easily slips away. Planning keeps you organised, lowers stress, and ensures you cover every subject.

### How to Plan

Think about:

- When you will study
- What subjects or topics you will cover. This information should have been given to you by your teachers. Check your Google Classroom.
- How you will study (notes, practice papers, flashcards, discussions)

## Using a Timetable

- A blank study timetable is available on the Parent Portal. Fill it in honestly with your weekly activities.
- Include meals, sport, part time work, friends, chores, and downtime.
- Identify how much time is left for study each day.

If you do not have much study time, you may need to make short term sacrifices. At this stage of the year, study must come first.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Exercise	8:00 a.m. Running club	7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Exercise	7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Exercise	8:00 - 4:00 p.m. Work	9:00 a.m. Yoga	9:30 a.m. Brunch with Mom
9:10 - 10:00 a.m. Eng 101 tutorial	9:40 - 10:30 a.m. Eng 101 lecture	9:00 a.m. Meet with Eng tutor	9:40 - 10:30 a.m. Eng 101 lecture		10:00 a.m. Water plants	12:00 - 4:00 p.m. Work
10:15 - 11:05 a.m. Econ 210 lecture	10:45 - 11:30 a.m. Econ reading	10:00 - 11:30 a.m. Work on Eng paper	10:45 - 11:15 a.m. Work on Bio presentation report		10:15 - 11:30 a.m. English reading	
11:15 - 12:00 p.m. Meet with Biology pres. group	11:45 - 12:30 p.m. History reading	11:45 - 12:15 p.m. Lunch and study	11:30 - 12:30 p.m. Library research tutorial		11:30 a.m. Clean bathroom	
12:30 p.m. Lunch with Sam	12:30 p.m. Lunch	12:30 - 1:20 p.m. Bio lab	12:30 - 1:15 p.m. Work on Eng paper		12:30 p.m. Lunch with Kerri	
1:50 - 2:40 p.m. Biology 120 lecture	2:20 - 5:00 p.m. History 225	2:00 p.m. Groceries	1:50 - 2:40 p.m. Bio 120 lecture	5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner and study	2:30 - 3:30 p.m. Eng 101 study group	

## Tips for Your Timetable

- Allocate time for every subject, not only the ones you enjoy.
- Make sure your timetable covers all of the topics / areas of study given to you by your teacher, so you learn all material that maybe in the exam.
- Give extra time to areas you find difficult.
- Stay flexible and adjust your timetable as needed

## YOUR EXAM CALENDAR

- Copy your exam dates from the official timetable onto a calendar.
- Mark the day, time, and venue for each exam.
- Place the calendar somewhere visible so you can plan your study around it.

## LEARNING THAT LASTS

1. Write it
2. Read it
3. Recite it
4. Recall it
5. Re write it



**The most effective learning is active. Reading notes again and again is not enough.**

Use the five step cycle:

1. **Write it** – put the information into your own words.
2. **Read it** – carefully check what you have written.
3. **Recite it** – say it out loud without looking.
4. **Recall it** – test yourself by covering your notes.
5. **Re write it** – create a shorter summary from memory.

Repeat this cycle until your recall is strong.

## TAKING STUDY BREAKS

Studying for too long reduces focus. Use the fifty ten rule.

- Work for about fifty minutes, then take a ten minute break.
- Do something different: stretch, go for a walk, play music.
- Avoid long phone use or television, which make it harder to restart.

Breaks refresh your brain and help new information settle in memory.

## FUEL FOR FOCUS

- Eat balanced snacks such as fruit, nuts, or yoghurt. Avoid relying on sugar.
- Drink water often. Even slight dehydration reduces concentration.
- Never skip meals, especially breakfast before exams.

Food and water are as important as your notes and calculator.

## MAKING STRONG NOTES

### Why Notes Matter

Revision notes are one of the best ways to prepare. They organise material, simplify information, and make revision quicker.

### How to Create Effective Study Notes

1. Start with a fresh notebook or a digital file.
2. Write clear headings at the top of each page.
3. Go through class notes and highlight the most important points.
4. Reduce long explanations into keywords, phrases, or diagrams.
5. Use colour or highlighting for key terms.
6. Make sure each page is easy to scan quickly.



## CONTENT AND SKILLS

### Subjects with more content (for example English or History)

- Focus on understanding key ideas and reducing information into summaries.
- Try the three step summary method:
  - First summary: condense notes to about twenty percent of their original length.
  - Second summary: reduce further to half the size of the first summary.
  - Third summary: create a one page sheet of key words and triggers.

### Subjects with more skills (for example Mathematics or Science)

- Improvement comes through practice. Solve as many questions as possible.
- Begin with easier ones and move on to harder ones.
- Use textbooks, worksheets, revision guides, and past papers.
- If you cannot solve a problem, seek help.

## MAKING SURE YOU UNDERSTAND

- Mark areas you do not fully understand and revisit them.
- Keep a checklist of unclear points and cross them off as you master them.
- Do not just copy notes. Take time to think about what they mean.







## MEMORISATION TECHNIQUES

- Summarise key points and keep a quick reference notebook.
- Recite aloud while studying. Teaching someone else is one of the best ways to remember.
- Use over learning. Review material beyond comfort level to strengthen memory.
- Test yourself regularly with flashcards or by writing out answers.
- Use memory aids such as acronyms, rhymes, or mind maps.

## USING PAST PAPERS

- Download NCEA past papers and practise under exam conditions.
- Notice how questions are structured and how marks are awarded.
- Pay attention to instructions and question styles.
- Review your answers and identify where to improve.

**TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS ON HOW TO BE EFFICIENT**

- STAY ORGANISED**  
CREATE A REVISION TIMETABLE AND A TO DO LIST TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH SCHOOL WORK AND REVISION. 
- TRY NOT TO PROCRASTINATE**  
TURN OFF THE TV AND PUT YOUR PHONE ON FLIGHT MODE WHILE STUDYING. 
- SET GOALS**  
SETTING GOALS WILL HELP YOU STAY FOCUSED WHEN REVISIONING. 
- STAY HEALTHY**  
EAT WELL AND EXERCISE. ENERGY LEVELS WILL BE HIGHER AND YOUR MIND WILL BE MORE FOCUSED. 
- TAKE BREAKS**  
DON'T FORGET TO SCHEDULE BREAKS. THIS COULD BE TAKING A WALK, STRETCHING OR MAKING A DRINK/SNACK. 
- BE FLEXIBLE**  
LEAVE ROOM IN YOUR SCHEDULE TO ADJUST TO UNEXPECTED EVENTS. 

# EFFECTIVE STUDY METHODS

## 1. Write model answers

First find out what sort of questions are to be expected in the exam

- You may find information about this through asking the teacher.
- You may also find looking through past exam papers on the NZQA website useful.

**Once you know what sort of questions to expect, try to predict possible questions.**

- Work through old exam papers to see what sort of questions were asked in the past. But - remember to check if the course has been revised or the format of the exam has changed before relying too much on old exams papers.
- Make a list of all the possible questions that you have identified.

## 2. Work out model answers to your questions

- Start with brainstorming (perhaps use a mindmap for this).
- Sort out/order your ideas.
- Decide on an outline and write it down.
- Then fill in the gaps.

## 3. Practice writing your answers

- As most of us don't spend a huge amount of time writing any more, sitting down and writing non-stop for a few hours (as you have to during an exam), can be very tiring.
- To prepare, simulate exam conditions and practice writing as fast as you can.
- Time yourself. Are you writing fast enough to finish the exam in the allotted time?
- Remember, not all pens are equal. Try out a number of different pens and spend some time writing fast with them. You'll find some pens are far more comfortable to hold than others. Once you've found one or two types of pen that are right for you, buy a few so you don't run out at a crucial time. If you find your hand gets very tired and sore, try swapping pens – this might help.

## 4. Summarise, using key words

**Summarising reduces the amount of material you have to remember while helping you to learn**

- Once you've studied a section, reduce the main ideas to key words that can be memorised.
- Start by deciding on the main (most important) idea in each paragraph.  
*Tip: ask yourself: 'What is this paragraph/section about?'*
- Rewrite the main idea in your own words; then reduce it so you're left with a short sentence.
- Then write a few key words (the supporting details) under each main idea.
- You can also use this technique to help you remember your model answers,

## 5. Distillation and re-creation

**First 'distil' the material by reducing it to manageable chunks**

- Identify the key words.
- Underline or highlight them.

Then **re-create** the information by

- Re-telling it in a different way (paraphrasing it) and/or
- Summarising it, using your own words.

## 6. Reciting aloud

**Read key sections aloud – listen to yourself.**

- Read each section three or four times and listen carefully. Pay attention to what you're saying.
- Hide the page from view.
- Recite the main points from memory.
- Check to see if your recall was accurate.
- Repeat these steps until you can recall the information easily and accurately.
- Try recording what you say and play it back, perhaps in the car while you're driving to work.

## 7. Test yourself

**The key here is using your own words.**

- If you think you know something, but can't put it into your own words, you probably don't know it well enough.
- Being able to explain something in your own words is the only way to be sure that you really understand it and know it well. It's also one of the best ways of preventing exam stress.
- Set a 'model' exam and try it under 'exam' conditions; practise writing to a time limit and *use your own words to answer the questions.*

## 8. Post-its

**Use Post-its to help you review/remember important facts or key words.**

- Stick the Post-its up in places where you won't miss them: next to the bathroom mirror, on the fridge door, next to the coffee mugs, etc.
- Each time you see a Post-it, briefly review the information.
- Move the Post-its around so you don't become so used to seeing them that you no longer notice them.
- Use different coloured Post-its and coloured pens, symbols, etc. - this helps you to remember.



## 9. Flashcards

Studying with flashcards is a form of active learning.

Using flashcards to revise forces you to think about the material and do something with it rather than just reading it. And this helps you remember what you are studying.

### How to use flashcards for studying

- As you're working through your learning material or reviewing your notes, identify and note any questions you could be asked.

*Tip: You could try imagining you're teaching the course: what questions would you ask in the exam?*

- Note any terms, concepts or formulas, etc., that you need to learn.
- Write each question, term, concept and/or formula on a separate flashcard.
- Write the answer or explanation on the other side of the card.
- Use your own words whenever possible.
- Shuffle the index cards so you can't figure out any answers based on their location in the deck.
- Look at the card on the top of the deck: Try to answer the question or explain the term.
- If you know it, great! Put the card at the bottom of the deck.
- If you don't know the answer, look at it, and put the card a few down in the deck (so it'll soon come up again).
- Keep working through the deck of cards until you know all the answers.

### 10. Use your 'spare time'

- Carry your cards with you everywhere you go so that you can take advantage of any spare time you may have - test yourself while you're waiting in a queue, on the bus or train, getting dressed in the morning, or any odd moment you can think of.
- You'll be amazed at how much 'extra' study time you have and how much more you remember!

### 11. Study with a friend

Teaming up with a friend, fellow student or study group (face-to-face or online) has many advantages

- Try bouncing ideas off one another.
- Help one another with difficult concepts.
- Motivate one another.
- Study buddies can also quiz one another – each one draws up a list of questions to ask their study buddy.
- Try 'teaching' one another – teaching is a great way to learn. It's also a good way make sure that you can explain something in your own words.
- If you don't have a study buddy, try 'teaching' a family member or a friend, or perhaps 'man's best friend' (or even the family cat). The very act of talking about the work will clarify your thinking/knowledge and will reveal any gaps or weaknesses that require your attention.

## EXAM STRATEGY

### The Day Before

- Revise the subject you have the next day.
- Take breaks and rest.
- Sleep for at least eight hours.
- Pack equipment such as pens, pencils, ruler, calculator, compass, and protractor.

### At the Start of the Exam

- Read through the whole paper.
- Answer easier questions first to build confidence.
- Write neatly and clearly.
- For essays, plan briefly, then write in paragraphs with clear grammar and spelling.

### Managing Time

- Allocate time according to marks available.
- If short on time, use bullet points or formulas instead of leaving blanks.
- Always attempt every required question.

### Answering Well

- Underline key words in questions.
- Stick to what is being asked.
- Use diagrams and examples where useful.



## AFTER THE EXAM

- Use the full time to check spelling, grammar, accuracy, and presentation.
- Ensure all questions are attempted and correctly numbered.
- Do not leave early. Every minute can improve your answers.
- Reflect afterwards on what worked well and what to change for next time.

## COMMON EXAM COMMANDS

- **Analyse:** break into parts and explain relationships
- **Compare or contrast:** identify similarities and differences
- **Define:** state the meaning of a term
- **Describe:** give a factual account
- **Explain:** give reasons or causes
- **Discuss:** present different viewpoints with evidence
- **Illustrate:** give examples
- **Outline:** provide the main points briefly
- **Summarise:** give a concise overview
- **Trace:** show the sequence or development of an event

## LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

- Eat healthy meals and keep your energy steady.
- Sleep at least eight hours every night, especially before exams.
- Exercise to reduce stress and stay positive.
- Keep balance in your life. Your mind and body need care to perform at their best.

